Agenda for Friday August 7, 2026 Fairbury History Tour

- 10 AM
  - **Meet at the Fairbury Echoes Museum at 126 W. Locust St**

  - 10:00 – 10:45
    - **Tour of museum including all 5 rooms**
      - Old Business room
      - School History
      - Women's Fashions
      - Reference Room
      - Rotating Exhibit of Fairbury Fair
      - Always looking for new board members !!!!!!!!!!
      - Questions and answers

  - 10:45 – 10:55
    - **Walk 50 feet around the corner and review Occident Flour Sign**
    - Dates back to at least World War I – have old photo
    - What paint to use?
    - Missing I story – Minnesota I – I is almost as tall as I am
    - Rain and paint running down the wall
    - World's record of 10 sidewalk supervisors !

  - 10:55 – 11:05
    - Walk ½ block east on Main Street
    - **Review Swing & Steidinger Sign**
      - only in business 1 year 1891 to 1892
      - sign was painted over in 1913, but letters gradually came back
      - Joseph Swing easy – had 2nd store next block east
        - Went to LaPorte, Indiana, town founded by Apostolic Christians
        - Several Swing descendants still in our area
      - What Steidinger was it?
        - Brucker and Steidinger biggest families in the area
        - Mary Beth and Helen Steidinger's father checked
        - Said he thought it was Alexander Steidinger
        - Found Chicago newspaper article saying he got married and would start working at Swing & Steidinger after the honemoon!
      - Missing letters on west column
        - Gordon Kinate bought building, ran story in the Blade to see if anyone knew missing words

        - Long time mayor Roy Taylor had office on north side, said when rain was from right direction, you could read the letters
        - Gordon went to 2nd story across the street, rain just right, read and wrote down the letters, used his paper to figure out the letters
    - **Review Archer House Sign**
        - Original name Archer House
        - George Archer built in 1882
        - 1891 name changed to Sherman House
        - George Archer indecent liberties with two girls age 8 and 9
            - Grand jury met, no charges, no trial, moved to Minnesota and died 19 months later
        - Chose to do oldest name of Archer House
        - No old photos of Archer House letters, only Sherman House
        - Chose 1845 Clarendon font, same as Sherman House font
        - Had to make Luan plywood cut-out of every letter, pencil, paint
    - **Visit my bookshelf in Waltons**
        - Briefly describe my books, Walton's history also

- 11:05 – 11:10
    - Walk ½ block east on Main Street
    - **Review old City Hall on National Register of Historic Places**
        - Built in 1892
        - Built from brick because so many wood buildings burned in 1870s and 1880s
        - Fire truck housed in 1st story with City Hall employees
        - City Council met upstairs, no internal stairway
        - Isaac Walton paid for clock and clock tower
            - Seth Thomas clock built in 1913 still running !!!!!!
        - Placed on National Register of Historic Places by Jack Tollensdorf
            - Only 2 places in Fairbury on the National Register
                - Old City Hall
                - Beach House (will go by later)
    - **Review Wells on Main Renovation Project**
        - Dr. Langstaff built the Clinic
        - He had 2 sons, both became doctors
            - Both in WWII
            - One son moved to Miami and died there
            - Other son stayed in Fairbury as doctor
            - Building fell in major dis-repair

        - Sean and Tonya Wells done miraculous job of saving and expanding the building to the old Fairbury Paint Store
        - Bed and breakfast, wedding venue, community meetings

- 11:10 – 11:30
    - **Central Park now Veteran's Memorial Park**
        - Was a sunken site like Sunken Park, 36" deep
        - Unsightly Von Tobel's lumberyard
        - 1st thing visitors to Fairbury saw on the train at the depot was ugly lumberyard
        - Around 1902, lumberyard sold and removed
        - TP&W brought in flatcars of dirt/debris
        - Volunteers filled in and made a park
        - GAR donated the 2 Civil War cannons
    - **Review 5 historic murals in Veterans Memorial Park**
        - 10 years ago, How to Display Local History??
            - Pontiac, Wall dogs, 5 year waiting line, $10,000 per mural
            - Personal vacation to Maysville, KY, where Maley's came from Ireland
                - Cincinnatti concrete walls for flood control with huge murals
                - Maysville, small river town with smaller concrete walls/murals
            - No need in Fairbury for concrete flood walls, but I can build wood frames to hold the murals
        - Review the 5 murals

- 11:30 – 11:40
    - Walk to outside of Lost in Time
    - **Review Fairbury's biggest business scandal story**
        - AB Claudon built the Claudon Bank
        - Son ran the bank
        - Son built huge mansion at age 27
        - Son Married Dr. Brewer's only daughter, had one son
        - AB Claudon Jr's wife died young
        - Peoria Banks figured out AB Claudon JR was embezzling
        - JR tried to commit suicide, coma 3 days, then died
        - Bank closed forever by auditors, father went on the run for 2 years
        - Father never stood trial, died 5 months later
        - Son adopted by grandfather, Dr. Brewer, went on to be medical Dr. in Wisconsin

- 11:40 – 12:30
  - **Lunch at Lost in Time**

- 12:30 -1:00
  - Ride in vehicle and see some local history spots, then on to Kilgus Dairy
  - **Beach House at 402 E. Hickory built in 1872**
    - Thomas Beach wealthiest Fairbury citizen, $50 million when he died
    - Banker and land speculator
    - 2 Lions bought later at Chicago World's Fair
      - Someone tried to steal the lions, so filled with concrete
    - Alma Lewis James – Fairbury Historian
      - Stuffed Clubs & Antimaccassars Fairbury history book
      - Only covers 1857 to 1900
      - She thought automobile changed life too much to cover it
    - Jack Tollensdorf renovated the house, placed on National Register of Historic Places
  - **9th and Walnut old coal mine site at 203 South 10th**
    - Only slag pile still in existence
    - Discuss other coal mine locations
      - Marsh mines 1 mile west on Route 24
      - Mine south of railroad tracks and east of old Honegger Mill
      - Timber Ridge
    - **Largest flower garden in Fairbury at 205 Munz Alley**
      - My sister Karen Munz
      - House built by Hartzell Munz circa 1958, Fairbury banker
      - Two city lots of flowers on about 3 levels down to Indian Creek
      - She volunteers and does SELCAS flower at corner of Main & 1st
    - **Ride in vehicle to golf course parking lot at 7429 N 2200 East Rd, face east towards Timber Ridge**
      - Review Fairbury's biggest coal mine that closed in 1941
      - only 1 of 5 mines we have the tunnel maps for
      - Did use mules down in the mine
      - Review where the old coal mine tunnels are located
      - Became City Dump
      - J.C. Ebach, Carl Borngasser, and Harvey Traub made it into one of the nicest subdivisions in Livingston County

- 1:00 – 1:30
    - **ride in vehicle to Kilgus Dairy at 7111 N 2150 E Rd**

        - Go through store and have ice cream or gellato

    - 1:30
        - **History tour complete**
        - Vehicle can take us back to starting point
            - Echoes Museum

Post-Tour Notes:

- Temp was about 84 F
- All women, no men on the tour. 12 ladies plus the coordinator from the Business Connection plus myself = 14 total people.
- Stayed in the shade of awnings of buildings on the north side of the street to keep the participants out of the sun
- Sat in the Gazebo at Veterans Memorial Park to discuss the Langstaff Clinic renovation, Veterans Memorial Park, and the business scandal story of the Claudon Bank. Worked very well because it kept us out of direct sun.
- Although not strictly historical, participants enjoyed viewing my sister's largest flower garden in Fairbury! My sister happened to be home and stepped onto the bus.
- I stayed on schedule very well from 10 AM until Lost in Time Lunch.

Bus Stops

1. Beach House at 402 E. Hickory built in 1872
2. 9th and Walnut old coal mine site at 203 South 10th
3. Largest flower garden in Fairbury at 205 Munz Alley
4. golf course parking lot at 7429 N 2200 East Rd
5. Kilgus Dairy at 7111 N 2150 E Rd
6. Fairbury Echoes Museum at 126 W. Locust St